A

SERMON

Preached on the

FAST-DAY,

Decemb. 22. 1680.

At St. *Margarets Westminster,*

Before the Honourable

House of COMMONS.

BY

GILBERT BURNET, D.D.

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Rev. 3. 2, 3.

I have not found thy Works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou haſt received, and heard, and hold faſt, and repent. If therefore thou ſhalt not watch, I will come on thee as a Thief, and thou ſhalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

THere is nothing in which Men of all Religions do ſo conſtantly agree, as in the Duties we are now about: ſo that it may be juſtly called *The Voice and Law of Nature*, which directs all people, when in great Straits, or under great Fears, to call on that God whom they ſerve, to implore his Pity, and pray for his Aſſiſtance. I need not tell you how all *Heathen* Nations do it: the *Jews* practiſe it: *Chriſtians* of every Perſwaſion have upon all great Occaſions, and in all Ages, ſet about it ſolemnly. Some, with the Pageantry of *Heatheniſh* Proceſſions; and others, with the ſimplicity that becomes their Profeſſion, as We do this day.

When the Ship in which *Jonas* endeavoured to have fled from the Diſcharge of an uneaſie Commiſſion which God had given him, was driven in a Storm, and brought to great Extremities, *every Man called upon his God:* only the guilty Perſon, whoſe God could only hear and help them, *lay faſt aſleep.* I need not enlarge Jon. 1. 5.

on the too viſible Occaſions of our Calling on God at this time: a ſadneſs that is ſpread over the Faces, and fills the Hearts of all Men; the preſent Diſtractions We are under, and the greater Miſchiefs of which We are afraid, ſpeak aloud, and need not be further deſcribed: ſo that all good Men had in their ſecret Mournings, and in their Wiſhes for a Publick Humiliation of the whole Nation, anticipated the Addreſs of this *Honourable Aſſembly*. It is well that We pay this viſible Homage to Religion and its bleſſed Author. In this Storm We have but one God to fly to, and one Lord and Mediator, by whom We may Addreſs to him: If the guilty Perſons will ſleep on ſtill, or do worſe, continue Sinning while we are Faſting and Mourning; yet if We *Cry mightily to God*, We may reaſonably hope that He will eaſe Us of that load of our Sins, which only can, and certainly will ſink Us, if it ſtill hang on Us. When We conſider Our preſent ill Condition, and alas! perhaps this is but the beginning of Our Sorrows; and reflect on the Signal Bleſſings We have received from God, and that We ſtill retain that holy Religion which was revealed from Heaven by Jeſus Chriſt, *The great High Prieſt of our Profeſſion*, We cannot be long to ſeek for the true Cauſes of all thoſe Evils which We either feel or fear. Truth is ſtill the ſame, and of the ſame Value with the Author of it; and the God of Truth changes not. What has then ſeparated between God and Us? and what hath raiſed that thick Cloud that ſeems to be ſet over Us, and is ready to diſcharge it ſelf in *Fire, Brimſtone, and a horrible Tempeſt? God's Hand is not ſhortned, that it cannot ſave, neither is his Ear heavy that it cannot hear: But it is our Iniquities*

Iſa. 59. 1, 2.

have

have separated between Us and our God, and our Sins have hid His face from Us, if He will not hear. Therefore those whom you Command to plead with You, in the Name of God on such Occasions, ought to *Cry aloud, and not spare*, but with all the plainness that becomes this Place, and this time, *Shew you your Transgressions and your Sins.* Isa. 58. 1.

In order to this, I have made choice of these words, being a part of a short, but weighty *Epistle* written by St. *John*, in the Name of Christ, to the Church of *Sardis*. Of it in particular we have so little recorded in the History of the Church, that We can gather nothing from thence to give Us a clearer Light into the meaning of these words: so I shall go no further than the *Epistle* it self, for setting before You the State in which it was at that time. *Sardis* had a great Name among the other Churches, as being one of those planted by the Apostles: *It had a Name that it lived, yet was dead:* Vers. 2. the Power and Life of Religion was under a great decay, the remainders of it in some few Persons, that *had not defiled their Garments*, were even ready to die: Vers. 4. they were all that left of those who had at first sincerely embraced the *Christian Religion*; they were but a Remnant of what had been, and they were like to drop off soon: but for the rest, though they retained the outward Profession of their Religion, yet Christ *knew their Works:* and though in some things they might be praiseworthy, yet they were not full Weight and Measure; they were not such as became their Circumstances, their Light, the Advantages they had, nor the Age they lived in, in which they ought not only to have *been blameless and harmless, but to have lookt like the Sons of God, and*

Phil. 2. 15. *to ſhine as Lights in the World, holding forth the Word of Life.* In a word, *their Works were not perfect before God.*

Upon this, Direction is given them, how to amend what was defective or amiſs among them: they were to *Remember what they had received and heard*, from the Apoſtles: they were to make that the ſtandard of their Actions: they were neither to frame a Religion to themſelves out of their own Imaginations, or make up a mixture of *Heatheniſm* and *Chriſtianity*, to which many were then enclined; nor were they to be ſeduced by any falſe Teachers from the Apoſtolical Doctrine, which was their Rule; to this they were to adhere and to *hold it faſt.* They were to maintain it in its Purity uncorrupted while they lived, and to deliver it ſo to their Poſterity at their Death.

They are alſo directed in the uſe of it, not to preſerve it only as a matter of Speculation, or as a Denomination by which they were diſcriminated from others, but were to improve it ſo as to be the better for it; *To Repent*, to change their Hearts and Lives. If they were not awakned by this Alarm given them from Heaven, they were to look for a more terrible blow, which ſhould ſurprize them in the midſt of their Securities, as a Thief when he is leaſt lookt for: which alſo inſinuates the Severity, as well as the ſuddenneſs of the Stroke. Thieves that break in in the Night, commonly carry all away with them, that is worth their pains. On the other hand, the Remnant, who were then *but a few, that kept their Garments clean*, are comforted with the hopes of enjoying God in a State of more perfect Holineſs, expreſſed in the Figure of *walking with Chriſt in White:*

White: and to encourage others to follow their Steps, a general Promise is made to all them that continued to the end in that course of life, that they should be advanced to the same State of perfect Holiness: their Names were now to be written in the *Book of Life*; and at the Great Day, when these Books should be opened, Christ would before God, Angels, and Saints, give such a Testimony to them as is recorded in the 25. *Chap.* of St. *Mat.* Gospel, *When I was Hungry, ye Fed me, &c.* This *Epistle* being thus explained, it will not be difficult to apprehend what the Particulars are on which I shall enlarge. They are these five: Vers. 5.

1. Jesus Christ observes, and will reckon with every Church, according to the blessings which they have received, if they live not suitably to them.

2. The Rule by which we are to examine our selves, and by which God will judge us, is the Doctrine which the Churches received from the Apostles.

3. All those who have heard and received this Doctrine, ought to keep it carefully, and to conveigh down that Sacred Trust committed to them to the succeeding Generations.

4. The chief Use We ought to make of this Doctrine, is to reform our Hearts and Lives; to repent, and to forsake our Sins.

5. Such as will not make this Use of it, have reason to look for sudden and severe Judgments. All these things are clearly gathered out of my Text, and seem to comprehend the full sense of these words, *I have not found thy Works perfect before God: Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a Thief,*

Thief, and thou ſhalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

To Return to the firſt.

I. Jeſus Chriſt obſerves, and will reckon with every Church, according to the Bleſſings which they have received, if they live not ſuitably to them. *I have not found thy Works perfect before God.* *Perfect*, the *Greek* word is different from that which is commonly rendered *Perfect*; and ſtrictly imports *accompliſhed* or *filled up* with ſuch Ingredients as make Works acceptable with God. By this we are not to underſtand that abſolute Perfection, which excludes all Sin, or all Defects; for Works ſo perfect belong to another State; but ſuch a Perfection as agrees to the Goſpel-Covenant, by which all that is ſincere is *perfect* in ſome ſort, and will be ſo accounted for to us by God. Wherein the Works of this Church were not perfect, We can only gueſs at it, by what we find in the other *Epiſtles* in this and the former Chap. and in the *Epiſtles* written by S. *Paul* to ſome other Churches. There are three things chiefly ſpecified and inſiſted on.

πεπληρωμένους.

1. Their falling from their *firſt Love*, and not doing their *firſt Works*, charged by St. *John* on the Church of *Epheſus*, and by St. *Paul* on the *Galathians:* they received the Goſpel, according to the Parable of the Seed *with great joy:* they begain *in the Spirit*, they did *run well*, but the fear of Perſecution, or the Cares of the World, and the Deceitfulneſs of Riches, made that the Seed of the Word of God, that had been ſown among them, either withered or was choaked: their firſt

Math. 13. 20, 21. Gal. 5.7.

firſt Fervour abated, their Love cooled, they became Lukewarm, and then quite cold and dead; ſo that thoſe who began *in the Spirit* in a ſpiritual Courſe, or had received the Gifts or Graces of the Holy Spirit, ended *in the Fleſh*, became carnal and looſe men. Gal. 3. 3.

2. They are charged for liſtning to falſe Teachers and Seducers: they had heard many ſtrange things from the Apoſtles which were new to them, and theſe did raiſe a curioſity in them after Novelties, with a diſpoſition to receive them; ſome of them are particularly named in theſe *Epiſtles*: ſome brought in *Heatheniſh* Sorceries and Idolatrous Rites among them, as *Balaam* and *Jeſabel* had done: others looſed all the Tyes of Modeſty and Wedlock, as the *Nicolaitans* did: others were for ſubjecting the *Chriſtian Church* to the Yoke of all the Ceremonies of the *Moſaical Law*: and by the Arts which theſe Seducers uſed, the Churches that had received the Apoſtles with great kindneſs, ſo that they were ready to have plucked out their very Eyes for them, a phraſe expreſſing the tendereſt affection, yet Were too much inclined to entertain thoſe falſe Apoſtles. Gal. 4. 15.

3. They were apt to divide and quarrel unreaſonably about little and inconſiderable things, and carried theſe Heats ſo far, that even when they aſſembled together to receive the Holy Sacrament, they met *for the worſe, and not for the better*: ſo that there were Diviſions among them, and the ſeveral Parties aſſumed ſuch Names as they thought would give them the moſt Credit: ſome were for *Paul*, ſome for *Apollo*, ſome for *Cephas*, and ſome for Chriſt. And the very Teachers themſelves were factious and contentious, ſo that ſome at *Rome*, when S. *Paul* was in Priſon for the Goſpel, preached there *out of Contention*, that they 1 Cor. 11. 17, 18. 1 Cor. 1. 12. Phil. 1. 15, 16.

they might thereby *add affliction to his Bonds:* though in that they were diſappointed; for notwithſtanding their Injuſtice to him, he rejoyced that Chriſt was preached by them. Some one or all theſe had perhaps got into the Church of *Sardis*, for which S. *John*, in the name of Chriſt, Expoſtulates with them. They had much to anſwer for, to whom the Apoſtles had delivered what they had ſeen and heard concerning Jeſus Chriſt, confirming it with many Miracles, and had conferred on them extraordinary Gifts, ſo that they were made *partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and of the Powers of the World to come:* Theſe ſeem to have been the ſins of this as well as of the other Apoſtolical Churches.

And now to apply all this to Our own Caſe, ſuffer me firſt in the Name of God to plead with you, and to ſet before you the many bleſſings you have received from him, beyond moſt or rather any Nation now in the World: We are born in a Country that abounds not only with all that is neceſſary for the Inhabitants, but yields Us great ſtore of very valuable Goods which We exchange with other Nations, and bring over ſuch things as grow not among Us; with a vaſt encreaſe of wealth, which from all parts of the World flows unto Us: Our Country being equally well ſituated for ſecurity and Traffique, We have almoſt forgot when We were viſited with the Plague or Famine. We are under a Government ſo rarely tempered by Law, that in it We have all the advantages of other Conſtitutions, and avoid the miſchiefs of the ſeveral forms of Government, as much as is poſſible for any thing that is managed by mortal and ſinful men to be: So that after any of the Convulſions that have been among Us, it has been ſtill found neceſſary to return to the old Channel, and obſerve

ſerve the Landmarks which Our Forefathers ſet Us. Theſe bleſſings We enjoy beyond any Nation in the World, but theſe We have in common with the former Ages; they are alſo Temporal and end with this Life, We have yet much more to anſwer for.

We have the Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt among Us, and therein the way to Life and Immortality hereafter, is opened to Us. This We have freed from all the impure mixtures of Idolatry or Superſtition with which it is defiled in other Churches, and are delivered from the Tyranny of a foreign Power. We have had Our Religion long ſecured to Us by Law, with all the encouragements that can be expected, in a Church ſo happily conſtituted between the extreams of Eccleſiaſtical Tyranny one the one hand, and Enthuſiaſtical principles on the other hand; ſo that it is only our own fault if We are not the Sanctuary and Defence of all other Reformed Churches, as well as We are the chief Object of the practices and deſigns of Our Enemies at *Rome*. This We have likewiſe in common with the former Age: but I ſhall next enumerate thoſe bleſſings that We of this Age have been more particularly favoured with: They are great and ſignal, and ſo obvious that it will be enough to name them.

We were involved in a long and tragical War at home, but were not ſwallowed up in it. Our Neighbour Iſland drank indeed of a bitterer Cup, and was covered almoſt all over with the Blood and the Carcaſes of the ſlain. But here the ſtorm was not ſo terrible: The Conquerors were ſo reſtrained by that ſupream Power that governs the World, that it is no ſmall wonder there was ſo little miſchief done, by thoſe who had

the Power to do ſo much: When Our Confuſions thickned ſo upon Us that our Government changed almoſt as oft as the Weather, all things returned of a ſudden to their old Chanel, the King was reſtored, and the Nation was ſetled in ſo ſerene and calm a manner, that it cannot be denied there was a ſignal hand of Heaven in it. The more have We all to anſwer for, that have made ſo ill uſe of ſo extraordinary a bleſſing; ſince that time we have had plenty and peace at home theſe twenty years, no breaking out nor complaining in Our Streets or Countries. We have all this while lived under the clear Light of the Goſpel; and though many of the Paſtors have much to anſwer, for their great failings, yet there have been raiſed up among us not a few eminent and faithful Labourers, who have aſſerted the Truth and demonſtrated the power of Religion, with as much advantage as hath been done in any Age ſince Miracles and Perſecution ceaſed: and theſe have frequently given publick and free warning to the Nation. Many excellent Books have been writ, and Sermons have been publiſhed as well as preached, which will remain to the next Age to teſtifie againſt that we live in. God has been calling on Us aloud from Heaven, both by his Mercies and Judgments, to turn to him and to bring forth fruits worthy of Repentance, and meet for the Kingdom of God; that is, for his holy Goſpel. A raging Peſtilence, and a conſuming Fire came quick one after another to awaken Us effectually: yet though We were then engaged in an expenceful War, God did not deliver Us up into the hands of our Enemies, though he corrected Us ſo ſeverely himſelf.

Thoſe

These things did perhaps give a little stop to some persons, though others went on still publishing their Sin as *Sodom*; but with the return of peace and the continuance of plenty, We returned to or still continued in our Sins: We have been delivered from another War since, and the ill designs of wicked Men were defeated and came to nothing: and now for above seven years We have slept in a profound Peace, and as profound a security, when there was nothing but vastation and misery in the Countries that lie next to us: But our Enemies slept not, they were contriving how to make Us return back again into *Egypt*, or submit not our Necks only, but our Souls and Consciences to that Tyrannical yoke of the *Roman* slavery; and thought the design so well laid for *rooting out* that which they call a *Pestilent Heresie*, that it was upon the point of being executed. Then did it appear that God was still watching over Us for good, and he that saw all these secret contrivances, so closely carried and cemented with so many sacred ties, disappointed all their Councils, and brought all their designs to Light, when We were least aware of it; being, though sensible of a great danger hovering over Us, yet little apprehensive that it was so near Us, and was to break out in such a manner. I need not run over all those steps, by which Divine providence has brought out what they intended we should never have known, till We had felt it and been past the possibility of preventing or redressing it: They are well enough known, and are often in all our Mouths, Oh that they were as much in our Hearts!

And now put all theſe things together, and ſee if it may not be ſaid concerning Us, what the Prophet *Iſaias* ſaid of the people of the Jews, *God has planted a vineyard in a very fruitful place, with the choiceſt vine, and has fenced it, and built a Tower in it:* In a word what more could have been done in this Vinyard, that has not been done in it? And therefore as partial as we are apt to be in our own concerns, it may be referred to our ſelves, to judge between God and Us. We ſee and acknowledge what he has done for us, let us next conſider what Grapes we have brought forth? What returns We have made to God? Have Our works been perfect before God? Alas what do I ſay perfect! Have they not been on the contrary the worſt, the moſt impious, and immoral that many could think on? We have exceeded the Sins of the Jews, and the Vices of the Heathens. It has not been only a ſlackning or going back of the Power of Religion, but an open revolt againſt Heaven; in too great a part of the Nation: a Banner has been ſet up for Athieſm and Impiety, and all have been encouraged to come about it. The Sins which our Popiſh forefathers and our more remote Heatheniſh Anceſtors were ſo much aſhamed of, that they committed them in corners, We have ſeen done in the ſight of the Sun. The belief of a God that ſees, rewards and puniſhes, the rules of Vertue, and the doctrine of Chriſt have been by ſome openly aſſaulted, and treated with indignities which no other Nation could endure; while others have if not directly conſented to them, yet looked on as unconcerned, have laughed at and been pleaſed with them. Advantages have been taken from the Hipocriſie or Euthuſiaſme of the laſt Age, to throw off the very appearances

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of Religion or Vertue in this Age: and it has passed for a piece of Gallantry and decent Breeding to be above the fears and apprehensions of a supream Power, or a future State. Have we forgot how publickly that great blessing of the Kings Restauration was abused? It grew to that height that it was thought a Scandal not to concur in all the excesses of Riot and Intemperance that did then defile the Land. Whether shall we now turn our Eyes? If on this place, Luxury, Immorality, and open Lewdness meet us almost in every corner: If on the Country, how does Intemperance, Injustice, and a total neglect, if not a resolved scorn of Religion fill most places? And the excesses of Drinking have in many parts of the Nation, not only corrupted Civil Conversation, but vitiated the very Vitals of our Government, by the ascendent that such practises have had in so essential and main a part of our security, as are the Elections of this great and Honourable Assembly: of whom if some generously scorned such methods, too many have complied too much with so base and so ignominious a custom. If we have thus abused the earthly blessings of Peace and Plenty, and have much to answer for on that account: Oh what can we say to excuse our selves who have not only brought no fruit to perfection, notwithstanding all that seed of the Gospel that has been so plentifully sown among us, but have done what we could to defie God himself, and to drive him out of our Country, being weary of that very dead Form of Religion yet remaining. And to bring this home to our present circumstances, though we are under great apprehensions of loosing this blessed Light; what are we doing to engage God to be on our side?

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We have been now for above two years in great diſorders, full of allarms, and under eminent and viſible dangers; but what Luſt or ill Cuſtom have we parted with? What demonſtration have we given to God or the World, that we conſider Religion as it is indeed the Power of God to the Salvation of our Souls? Or what do we for our holy Faith, that Infidels, Mahometans, Jews, or Papiſts, would not do for their perſwaſions? Do we continue ſtill in our Lewdneſs, Intemperance, Oppreſſion, Injuſtice, Falſhood and ill Nature, while we are talking of preſerving our Religion, and yet are doing all we can to undermine or overthrow it?

If God is againſt us, all that we can do for preſerving Religion or our other juſt Rights, will either by his wiſe and holy Councils be quite blaſted; or perhaps the very methods that to us ſeem the moſt probable to ſecure them, may in concluſion really introduce that which we fear ſo much. Are our works perfect before God who knows them? To make a work perfect it muſt be good in it ſelf, flow from a good principle, and be directed to a good end. The greateſt part of our works are faulty in all theſe particulars, ſo that neither We nor our Works can be accepted with that God, That *is of purer Eyes than that he can behold Iniquity.* Some of our Works may be in themſelves good, and ſuch is a zeal for the Reformed Religion; but if ſome do not believe that about which they make ſo much noiſe, or if others have no deſign but to ſerve baſe ends or private Intereſts, which they hid with the pretence of Religion, and are ready to throw it off, when they have attained that for which they are

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in truth only concerned, ſhall not God ſearch this out? Things may be ſo dreſſed up, as to have a fair appearance, but to God they appear as indeed they are: So the true value of us and our works, is according to what we are in his ſight, from whom nothing can diſguiſe us. From all theſe things it is but too evident, that our Works are not perfect before God.

If we will conſider more particularly what may be ſuppoſed to have been the ground of the Expoſtulation in my Text, with this Apoſtolick Church of *Sardis*, we ſhall find the parallel betwixt it and us agrees but too well. Theſe Churches had fallen from their firſt Love, and their firſt Works: Oh what ſad decays are we come under! And how much have we declined from that Zeal and Love which our Fathers bore to the Reformation! There were two things that were viſible in the practice of thoſe who firſt embraced it among us: the one was the great pleaſure they took in reading the Scriptures, from whence they were in deriſion called *Goſpellers*. When the Bibles were firſt ſet up in Churches, and went at ſuch rates that ordinary people could not buy them, what a running was there to Churches, and what crouds gathered all day long about ſuch as could read, to hear this bleſſed Word, which is now in all our Hands, and yet is ſcarce ever conſidered by us? Some read it only to abuſe it and make themſelves merry with ſome Atheiſtical jeſts to which they wreſt it: Others judge that indecent, ſo becauſe they will make no ill uſe of it, they make none at all, and never open it but for faſhion: ſome imploy their time in ſearching into the abſtruſer parts of it, with

with a prying and vain curioſity: ſome read it meerly to acquire a faculty of talking in ſuch a Stile, and ſo either they pervert the Scriptures by their falſe Gloſſes, or only learn to defend ſome Opinions out of it, or to Diſcourſe in that Dialect, for private Deſigns, to which that is perhaps ſome way neceſſary. But who read them with a ſimplicity of Mind to be directed by them, and to be inwardly inflamed by the heavenly ſtrains in them? So that we have little left among us to entitle us to the Name of Goſpellers.

The other chief Character by which the *Reformed* were at firſt known, was their applying themſelves only to God through Jeſus Chriſt. This was intended to take men off from two fatal Errors, in which they had been formerly led; the one was relying on ſuch external Works as were really of no Value at all, and were only the juglings of thoſe deceitful Guides, that had ſet up Pilgrimages, ſlight Penances, and the purchaſing Indulgences, in the room of that which our Saviour had revealed to the World; the other was their imagining that they were juſtified by the Sacraments, upon ſome ſlight acts of ſorrow or devotion: In ſtead of theſe things the Reformers ſet up the applying to God through Jeſus Chriſt according to the methods of the Goſpel: ſo that great and frequent addreſſes to the Father through his Son was the mark by which they were then known: This begetting in them a ſenſe of that Love which their Saviour had for them, could not but kindle returns of Love ſutable to it; and that muſt needs reform the inward man, upon which Purity and Holineſs of Life will certainly follow.

This

This was the main Article of the Reformation, and being that upon which the hopes of Salvation depended, was indeed the thing of the greateſt conſequence; though it was afterwards managed with too much Metaphyſical nicety. In ſum this being the chief Character of a true Proteſtant, we may ſoon ſee how much we have fallen from that Love which our Fathers had to this Truth, while they lived; and that appeared more ſignally by their dying for it, when they were called to give their laſt Teſtimony to it. But what is all this to us? Are we living under the influences of that love? do our hearts burn with the ſenſe of it? what reverence have we for the perſon, or what obedience pay we to the Doctrine of our Crucified Saviour? If any of this remain, it is much ſpent, at leaſt, and ready to dye.

The ſecond thing charged on theſe Churches, was their being apt to be carried away by the cunning ſlight of thoſe who lay in wait to deceive, and their being too eaſily diſpoſed to vitiate Chriſtianity with the mixtures of Judaiſm or Hetheniſm or other errors. Our vices have taken us off from the practice of the plain and indiſpenſable duties of our holy Religion; and then it is no wonder we find no pleaſure in that Doctrine which can give no true comfort, to ſuch as continue in their ſins. This diſpoſes people to ſeek that elſewhere, which they cannot have among us: and therefore a Religion made up of pomp and ſhew, wherein God and his Saints were offered to be bribed, in which they knew the rates of ſin and the price of Heaven found us but too well prepared to become Proſylites to it. Our ſins have been alſo ſo viſible and ſcandalous, that they have made our Communion grow

loathſom to many well diſpoſed but weak minds, and have tempted them to ſeparate from our Aſſemblies, when they ſaw ſuch mixed multitudes among us: ſo that they have run into Sects, that had the appearance of greater gravity and ſtrictneſs.

3. And we are no leſs faulty in the third particular, of contending out of meaſure, for things that are no way eſſential to ſalvation. Things of ſo indifferent a nature, that ſucceeding ages will wonder how men could manage ſuch long and eager conteſts about them. We have fallen into paſſions concerning them, theſe have grown up to a hatred, which hath broken out into moſt violent and diſmal effects, and ſeems now ſetled into a formed rent and ſeparation. Where is that charitable, healing and compaſſionate temper which becomes Chriſtians, and reformed Chriſtians? eſpecially when they are as it were ſtrugling for life. Oh ſhall nothing make us wiſer? ſhall neither the advantages our enemies take, nor the prejudices Religion ſuffers by our conteſts, diſpoſe us to bear with one anothers infirmities, and to manage our differences, if we cannot entirely bury them, with a more Chriſtian and decent temper! There have been extreams on all hands: neither ſide can free themſelves from being too much exaſperated: The reſentment for what has been done in the ſeveral turns of affairs, has gone too far with us. It is not ſo much our differences that divide us one from another, as our alienation one from another which widens our differences, and makes them appear to be greater than indeed they are. So on all accounts we muſt acknowledge, that when our works are weighed in thoſe juſt ballances they cannot be found perfect before God. I hope we are all in ſome meaſure convinced

vinced of this: The thing is alas too viſible. What is then to be done? but to ſet about a real Reformation with all poſſible ſerioufneſs and ſincerity. And in order to this and to direct us in it, here is a rule and ſtandard given, by which we may govern our ſelves in the means or methods to it: and that is the ſecond thing I propoſed to ſpeak to.

2. The Rule by which are to examine our ſelves, and by which God will judge us, is the Doctrine which the Churches received from the Apoſtles, *Remember therefore how thou haſt received and heard.* Here is a certain fixed rule; we are neither left to the heats of our own fancies, nor to the uncertainties of Tradition, nor to the impoſtures of ſuch as may pretend to the government of our Conſciences: but are conducted by a more certain thread. It is true, in the Apoſtles days this Doctrine was at firſt preached and received, before it was written. There was no great danger as long as they lived, who might be appealed to in any difficulty which could ariſe concerning their Doctrine: ſo it is a vain way of arguing to infer from the mention of *Tradition* in the Epiſtles, that we after ſo many ages are paſt, and ſo many impoſtures have been diſcovered, ſhould be obliged to receive what may be obtruded on us as Apoſtolical Tradition. Tradition while the Apoſtles lived, was what the Scripture is now: And indeed ſo uncertain a conveyance is Oral Tradition, that in the very Apoſtles days or ſoon after, when there were no advantages to be made by ſuch cheats, and ſo there was leſs to tempt men to them, yet many falſe Goſpels were given out, and falſe Doctrines were infuſed into ſome weaker people. We know how unfaithful a conveyor Tradition was of Natural Religion among the

Gentile Nations: The Goſpel tells us how the Jews doted on the Traditions of their Fathers, and by them *made the Commandments of God of none effect.* The uncertainty of Tradition where it was not put in writing, appeared within an age after the Apoſtles, in the contests concerning the obſervation of *Eaſter*: both ſides vouching the practice of the Apoſtles, and that even while ſome were alive, that had ſeen them and had lived with them. But after that wealth and greatneſs had corrupted the Church, and this holy Religion was made an Engine to advance the ambition and intereſts of deſigning men, then what a ſwarm of ſuppoſititious writings appeared every where to ſupport ſome opinions or deſigns; many of theſe were diſcovered and branded, but others paſſed without a cenſure; ſo that it was long before Criticks in this and the former age, could find out what was genuine, and what was counterfeit.

The moſt advantagious Impoſture was coined and received in the *9th* Century; a whole Volume of the Epiſtiles of the firſt Biſhops of *Rome* from the Apoſtles days downwards, was pretended to be found; in which they were repreſented as governing the Church in the former ages, with the ſame *fulneſs of power*, that their Succeſſors have pretended to ſince. This was rejected by ſome in that age, but kindly entertained by thoſe that were more concerned for their own greatneſs than for Truth: and by the Preſidents in theſe Epiſtles they juſtified what they did, til their Tyranie came to be generally ſubmitted to: And now when theſe Epiſtles are found to be ſpurious, they have been forced to throw them away; but ſtand upon poſſeſſion and preſcription, tho it began at firſt upon this and ſome other impoſtures,

poſtures, not unlike it, ſuch as the Donation of *Conſtantine* and many more.

They well know that their cauſe cannot be defended if the Scriptures are appealed to: theſe in many points are directly againſt them, as in the worſhip of Images, and Angels, the praying in an unknown tongue, and the denying the Chalice, or ſaying that Chriſts body which is now in Heaven, is in the Sacrament: in other things they are ſilent, ſuch as the Popes Power, the Infallibility of a General Council, the praying to Saints, the redeeming ſouls out of Purgatory, Indulgences, Pilgrimages, with a thouſand other additions, by whi h they have vitiated the purity of that holy Doctrine, which the Apoſtles delivered to the world. This is the foundation of our whole Religion, that we believe all that the Apoſtles delivered to the Churches, and no more: ſo we ſtand to this appeal in my Text, *Remember therefore that thou haſt received and heard.* It were eaſie to inſtance it in many particulars, and to ſhew you how at firſt ignorance and ſuperſtition let in ſome Cuſtoms; and perhaps thoſe who introduced them at firſt, being innocent, but weak men, meant well in it: ſo to draw the Heathens off from their Idolatry, they directed them to call on Saints, inſtead of the gods they had formerly worſhipped: and to perſwade people to receive the Sacrament with great devotion, they ſtrained their eloquence and invention to recommend the value of it in high figures. Many more might be named, but theſe may ſuffice: afterwards when the *Roman* Empire was over-run by the incurſions of the Barbarous Nations, and Civility, Religion, and Learning, were almoſt driven out of the world; then ſome crafty and aſpiring Prieſts came to graft upon the

Cuſtoms

Cuſtoms of the former times, new Opinions, and ſtill to add new Rites, till in the end they ſwelled up to what they are now at in the *Roman* Church. When theſe Opinions were firſt broached, Viſions and Dreams were given out to ſupport them; and if theſe leſſer frauds did not prevail, pretended Miracles were not wanting to give them credit, till they were received; and being once received, they were enrolled among the Traditions of the Church, and ſo were no more to be conteſted or denied: if any preſumed to do it, it was at his peril. Theſe Miracles were coined ſo, as to fit not only the Doctrine it ſelf, but the way of explaining it; and as new ways of explaining were fallen upon, new Miracles ſuitable to theſe new expoſitions were at hand.

When the Doctrine of the Corporal preſence was firſt received in the *9th* Century, it was believed that the whole Loaf was an entire body of Chriſt, ſo that he was ſliced in pieces and eat up in gobbets; and ſo they continued to underſtand it near 300 years. Then the Miracles to prove it were adjuſted to that conceit; it was given out that it did ſometimes bleed, and pieces of it were ſaid to be converted to pieces of fleſh: but after that the School Divinity came to be in requeſt, this way was not found ſo defenſible, nor ſo decent: and then it was ſaid, Chriſt was in every Crumb of the Hoſt; ſo that upon the breaking it, an entire Chriſt flew off from the reſt, which yet remained ſtill as entire as it was, notwithſtanding that diminution: and then as they bleſſed Wafers inſtead of a Loaf, ſo the former Miracles were not ſo much talked of, though ſome ignorant Prieſts that did not conſider that theſe were contrary to the Doctrine of their Church, did in ſome places

places continue to act the former cheats; but new ones were more generally invented, and Chriſt was ſaid to appear all in rayes, over or upon the Hoſt: ſo well practiſed were they in the arts of jugling, as to make their tricks always agree with their Hypotheſis.

In oppoſition to all theſe falſe Doctrines and lying wonders, the Reformed have from the firſt beginning of the Reformation ſet up the whole ſtrength of their cauſe, upon this ſingle Plea, of receiving nothing as a part of their faith, but what could be found in the Writings of the Apoſtles; that ſo all agreeing on a common Umpire their differences might be more eaſily compoſed. The Church of *Rome* knows well what the iſſue muſt be, if this is granted, and ſo have put the ſtrength of their whole cauſe upon the authority of the Church, that is themſelves, and the certainty of Oral Tradition, handed down by ſuch men as themſelves are: Whether the one or the other ſeems to be the more ingenuous Principle, the more certain method of Trial, and the leſs liable to deceit, I leave it to the Conſciences of all wiſe and good men.

But as we ought to *remember what we have thus received and heard*, ſo the end of this is not barely for ſpeculation, to inform us about ſome notions, or to furniſh us with arguments and diſcourſe: theſe things are only neceſſary for a further end; that our minds being well informed, and our belief rightly directed, we may govern our lives according to what the holy Apoſtles have left to us. It is becauſe *their works were not perfect*, that they are here charged *therefore to remember the doctrine that they had received*: What ſhall our knowledge, our Orthodoxie, and ſoundneſs of opinion avail us, if we do not reduce it to practiſe? unleſs it be to heighten

our

our condemnation, and to intitle us to more ſtripes and ſeverer judgements. Here we will find our duties ſet before us, and from thence we will both know what our ſins have been, and how to turn from them. Oh that there were ſuch a heart in us! But as we ought to remember and improve the Doctrine delivered to the Church by the Apoſtles, ſo we ought to keep it carefully.

3. And this is the third particular I am to ſpeak to: All who have received this Doctrine, ought to preſerve it, and to conveigh down that ſacred truſt committed to them, to the ſucceeding generations. This is to *Hold-faſt*, what we have received and heard. The meaning of this, conſidering the circumſtances the Church of *Sardis* was in, is either that they ſhould preſerve it pure, and keep it as it was delivered to them, or that if perſecutions ſhould ariſe for the Faith, they ſhould not depart from it for the love of this preſent world, or make ſhipwrack of it; but ſhould *hold faſt the profeſſion of their Faith without wavering*. There were many Tares ſown then in the field of the Church, many of the followers of *Simon Magus* were corrupting the Chriſtian Religion; it was neceſſary on that account to look carefully to that ſacred *Depoſitum*, that was put in their hands. There was alſo a black Cloud gathering, a perſecution was coming on the Church: One ſtorm had paſſed, that had been raiſed by *Nero*, and they were now in another ſet on by *Domitian*; therefore it was neceſſary to put them on their guard, and to charge them to keep or *Hold faſt* the Doctrine delivered to them. This was all that they could be obliged to; but in our circumſtances there is ſomewhat elſe imported in this Holding faſt, that

that we ought not only to keep our Religion pure, and to be ready to ſuffer for it, if we are called to it, but ſince we enjoy the protection and ſecurity of law and lawful authority, we ought to hold that faſt, and deliver it down to our poſterity, as we have received it from our Fathers.

We are to keep it pure from the corruptions that may be introduced to vitiate the ſimplicity of our holy Religion: we know the Enemies of the Church ſleep not, tho the Watchmen ſleep too often. While we have Adverſaries that are ſo reſtleſs and induſtrious, that make up in their arts of inſinuation and indefatigable diligence, what is wanting in the juſtice and goodneſs of their Cauſe; on theſe our eyes ought to be much ſet. They have corrupted Religion where ever their arts have been ſucceſful; and have endeavoured to overthrow all Governments, and broken the peace of all Societies that have been ſo much on their guard, as to look carefully to them. For that ſame principle that makes them burn and deſtroy where they have power, makes them alſo inceſſantly Plot and practiſe where they have it not. Severities in matters of Religion are indeed contrary to that humanity that is imprinted in our nature, and to thoſe rules that are often repeated in Scripture. But if any Sect of Religion continues to breed frequent and almoſt uninterrupted diſturbances in any Government, it is not enough to puniſh thoſe that are found in the fault, but if it is evident, as it is certainly in this caſe, that their Doctrine ſets them on to, and will bear them through in ſuch conſpiracies, it ſeems not poſſible to ſecure the peace of a Kingdom ſo much infeſted by them, as we have been now 120 years, but by delivering it entirely out of their hands, and putting an utter

end to the diſtractions we have been in, and the miſchiefs we have ſmarted under, by their means. They will live much better among their own friends, beyond Sea, where they may freely exerciſe their own Religion; and I am ſure we will be much the happier and quieter for being freed from the trouble they have given us. And thus we are to *Hold faſt* the Apoſtles Doctrine and to keep our ſelves from the infection of thoſe who have corrupted it.

But if this cannot be done, and if God either to puniſh us for our former ſins, or to raiſe again the true ſpirit of the reformed Religion, to purifie us from our droſs, and to melt us into one lump, and cloſe up thoſe breaches which we have been rather widening than healing, will deliver us up into the hands of our mercileſs and implacable Enemies; then, as we know what we are to look for, ſo we ought to prepare our ſelves for it, and reſolve to be *faithful to the death*. We know what will be, not only by what has been, but by what is the Doctrine of that Church, of extirpating Hereticks, decreed in their General Councils: and what they have met with of late among us, has ſo whetted their Spirits againſt us, that if ever we are in their power, the cruelty of their Religion, being quickned by their private reſentments, we can look for nothing, but either to be forced to worſhip a piece of bread, and to renounce that Faith which we now profeſs, or to ſeal it with our blood, and that perhaps in the cruelleſt manner. I know it is not eaſie for fleſh and blood ſomuch as to think on theſe things without horror; But Oh, what will it be to ſuffer them! It will not be our living peaceably, nor our keeping our belief to our ſelves that will ſecure us: we muſt in all things comply, nay, and if we ſhould diſſemble and comply, we muſt by an over-acting zeal

zeal procure our pardon for what is past, and beget a confidence in them for the future. I shall on this head represent a little of what you may expect, by mentioning some few passages of Queen *Maries*, never to be forgotten, bloody Reign; that are not so generally known. At first She promised the continuance of the established Religion, soon after She procured it to be generally changed, even while the Laws were yet in force for it; but then it was said, none should be forced in their Consciences if they would live peaceably: but when the change was fully brought about, then according to the Natural Genius of that Religion, an open and undistinguish't persecution was resolved on. Orders were then sent from the Council Table, to the Justices of Peace, to have spies in every Parish to observe every mans deportment: a bare suspition was ground enough to proceed upon. Persons being presented upon suspition, were imprisoned: and, without any proofs or witnesses brought against them, Articles were offered to them, to which if they did not in all things answer according to the Doctrine of that Church, and if they could not be induced to change their perswasions, they were condemned to the fire, tho they had neither said nor acted any thing contrary to the established Religion. And it went yet further. The Justices of peace having been often writ to, grew more and more backward to these cruelties, especially when they saw them burn poor people single at first; then by pairs, then six, eight, ten, and thirteen were burnt in one fire: neither the blind nor lame, aged men, nor women near their time, no nor new-born Infants, escaping the rage of these Butchers: Then to make way for the Courts of Inquisition, a Commission was given to a selected number, of whom three was a Quo-

rum, to make enquiry over all *England*, not only of ſuch as were ſuſpect of Hereſie; but of all that did not expreſs their zeal for the Popiſh Religion, in taking holy Bread, or holy Water, or going in Proceſſions; which tho they are not things to which all in that Communion are obliged, yet theſe diſcovering the affections and inclinations of the people, ſuch as did them not, were to be proceeded againſt upon theſe ſuſpitions. At firſt ſuch as were burnt had their lives offered to them at the Stake if they would recant, but as the perſecution went on they became more barbarous, ſo that it was not enough for one to recant then: for a Sheriff was caſt in Priſon and fined, for ſtaying the execution of one who did it: It was ſaid if he recanted ſincerely, it was better to burn him, than to leave him to the temptations of becoming a relapſe; and if he did it not ſincerely, it was pity to ſpare him. So which way ſoever it was, dye and burn he muſt. And that none might eſcape out of their Toils, care was taken to ſecure all the Ports that none might fly beyond Sea.

Here is a ſad proſpect before us; but in what diſpoſition are we to bear it? we have no reaſon to doubt but great numbers will turn with the tide, as they did then. Many who ſeem now to be hot and zealous for the Proteſtant Religion, will then, perhaps, be as buſie to diſcover and accuſe thoſe whom they now cenſure, not only raſhly but maliciouſly. Men of ill Lives and defiled Conſciences, want that principle which muſt ſtrengthen them to bear the Croſs, and make it eaſie and comfortable to them. It is quite another thing to own this Faith in our preſent circumſtances, from what it will be to adhere to it then.

It is not yet come that, and God of his infinite mercy preſerve us from it. We are taught by him that knew

knew our nature well, *to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, for though the Spirit*, or our ſublimer powers may be *forward and willing, yet the fleſh is weak*. We are therefore to do all that is in our power, and is conſiſtent with that Religion which we profeſs, to prevent this. You of this Honourable Aſſembly are now entruſted with the keeping this Doctrine, as it is a part of the Law of the Land; the people have truſted you with all that is dear to them; and it is hoped you will acquit your ſelves as worthy of ſo great a confidence. On this I ſhall enlarge no further, but apply to you the meſſage which *Mordecai* ſent to Queen *Eſther*, when her people were marked out for deſtruction: *Think not that you ſhall eſcape more than all the reſt: for if you altogether hold your peace at this time, there may come enlargement and deliverance to us from another hand; but you and your houſes ſhall be deſtroyed: and who knows if you are come* into this truſt *for ſuch a time as this is*. If any ſhall, either on the one hand, give up this holy Religion, and thoſe means which are moſt effectual to ſecure it, for private or baſe ends of their own; or on the other hand ſhall, to gratifie their revenge, or to advance any ill deſign, endeavour to drive things to confuſion, ſo that we become a prey to a formidable Neighbour, where Popery, with it concomitant Tyrannie, ſhall ſubdue us at once; Theſe are the betrayers of their Religion and their Country, and do entitle themſelves to the heavieſt curſes in the whole Book of God. Eſth. 4.13.

But the Nation hopes better things from you: and, and as we pray for it, ſo are we confident they ſhall not be aſhamed or diſappointed of their hope. Your maintaining the Laws, or providing ſuch new ones

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as our preſent circumſtances call for, for the preſervation of our Religion, is not all that you are to do for it; there are many other things beſides, that come under your care, which are alſo neceſſary, that we may *Hold faſt* this our profeſſion. I ſhall name two particulars. The one is, that there are ſo many Pariſhes in this great and rich Kingdom, in which there is ſo little proviſion left for thoſe that labour in the work of the Goſpel, that it is not poſſible, humanely ſpeaking, to find fit and able Paſtors to undertake ſuch a charge upon ſo mean an encouragement: and many of theſe fall to be the greateſt and the moſt populous Pariſhes in their Neighbourhood: *The labourer is worthy of his hire:* but in many of theſe the hire will not amount to the meaneſt and moſt frugal ſubſiſtance, that can conſiſt with the decency of that Function. If weak or ſcandalous men are caſt on ſuch places, ſo that the people are neither inſtructed nor edified by their labours, but are rather ſcandaliſed by them; it is worth your ſerious conſideration to find out effectual means for redreſſing ſo great an evil, by which ſo many ſouls are loſt, and ſuch a door has been opened to ſeducers and falſe teachers among us. The other is, that we will endeavour to ſecure the Reformed Religion among us, by doing all we can to maintain the outworks of it, I mean the foreign Churches, ſome of whom are now in a moſt deplorable and ſinking condition. The methods that *Julian* the Apoſtate uſed to extirpate Chriſtianity, not by the quick and ſharp ways of perſecution, but by ſlower ſteps; being now taken to root out that which main force could not do. To theſe we ought to extend our compaſſion and aſſiſtance, as we would expect the

the like from others when we may be brought to drink of the like bitter Cup, which how near it may be to us, God only knows. But all these means will prove ineffectual if we have not God on our side; except he watch over us, and build up our ruines, you that build and we that watch shall labour in vain. This leads me to the fourth particular, which is, Psal 127. 1.

4. That the chief use we ought to make of this Doctrine, is to reform our hearts and lives, to repent of, and forsake our sins. *Repent.* I shall not here run out into a large discourse of this, but sum up in short what is comprehended under it. The word imports more than a bare sorrowing for our sins, or an external change of our life, and does chiefly signifie the inward change and reformation of our minds: when we put on a new disposition, come under new principles, and are inwardly turned in the value and estimate we have of things, and in our practical judgements and formed resolutions. Repentance is, when a man having another sense of God, and true goodness, another apprehension of vice and sin, other thoughts of a future state, other impressions of the love of Christ, and the truth of the Gospel; and all these things growing into formed principles in him, his mind is turned to such a detestation of his former course of life, as engages him not only to forsake it, but to enter upon a quite different Course; so that he feels himself inwardly regenerated and changed. Oh have I not been discribing a thing little understood! Some sorrow for sin, which is scarce possible for the worst men to avoid, is all the notion too many have of it: Others fancy to compound for their sins, with some austerities, by an outward pageantry, or compounding with

with God or his Saints if they can, and doing it effectually where they can, with the Priest: believing that his absolving them is of some other vertue, than a declaration to them of what they may certainly expect if they are sincere in their repentance. But if these things come short of a true repentance, what is to be said of those who have not so much: who have no remorse for their sins, but live on securely in them, or do worse, *Glory in their shame*. These are far enough from having repented, who are growing up daily to a higher pitch in their impieties. You have expressed your sense of the necessity of this duty, by your addressing about it: but if it goes no further than the solemnity of a days vacation from business, or abstaining from meat, and the hearing some Sermons, or joining in prayers; this can have no other effect but to raise our guilt higher, by our pretending to draw near to God with our Lips, when our hearts are far from him. Our sins are drawing heavy judgements on us: our repentance only can prevent them; not such a trifling performance as I have described, but a sincere and entire turn to God. We ought to be humbling our selves in secret, every one for those sins by which we have provoked him, and have been adding to that great heap of guilt, by which we have been too universally treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. We are apt enough to censure the vices and failings of others, especially if on other accounts we are displeased with them, and if we our selves are not visibly faulty in the same kind: but there are other sins besides Uncleanness and Intemperance, which may involve us in the common ruine that threatens us. And if we know our selves guilty, even of that which we censure in others, we by judging them do condemn

condemn our selves. Let us recollect our Thoughts, and ask our selves, What have we done? Have we been adding Sin to Sin, and perhaps Hypocrisy, or a counterfeit Zeal to all the rest? We are under the Eye of the All-seeing God, to whom all things lie naked and open, *Darkness before him shineth as the Day; the Darkness and the Light are both alike to him.* Let us not deceive our selves; God is neither to be mocked, nor bribed. It is only our sincere Repentance that can again restore us to his Favour; and if the Sins of the Nation are not grown to that height, that, as is said of the Sin of *Manasseh*, God *will not pardon it; so that though* Noah, Job, *and* Daniel, *were among us, they could only deliver their own Souls*; We may hope, that upon our Repentance, either that Cloud of Wrath now over our Heads, may be broken and dissipated, or, at least, that our Peace and Tranquility may be so lengthned out, that *the Evil shall not come in our days.*

2 *King.*24.4. *Ezek.*14.14.

If we Repent truly, we will lay down our Animosities and Quarrellings about lesser Matters; and finding how guilty we are all in the presence of God, we will be more gentle in the Judgments we make of others, and more severe in the Censures we pass upon our selves. We will change the course and frame of our Lives, not only in such instances as are more scandalous, and so may be a prejudice to us in our other Designs, but will enter upon another Method and Way of Life, such as becomes Christians. If this is not done, all that we do beside, will not be effectual to preserve us. If God is still offended with us, he will not want Instruments

for our puniſhment, though we had not a Papiſt in *England*, nor an Enemy in all the World.

But on the other hand, If we ſincerely turn to God, as we know in general he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and full of Compaſſion; ſo we have, in particular, all the Aſſurances that either his Promiſes, or the Experience of former Times can give us, that He *will receive us graciouſly; that he will take away all our Iniquities, and heal all our back-ſlidings.*

Perſonal Repentance, and the mourning for the Sins of others, are Duties incumbent on all: To theſe you ſtand obliged in your private Capacities; But as you make up this Honourable Aſſembly, there is a further Repentance incumbent on you. You, who repreſent the Nation, ought, in the Name of the whole Body of the People, to think on ſuch Laws as are neceſſary for the reſtraint of Vice. It is viſible, the Impiety of the Nation has made way for Popery; and though that were out of doors, yet if the other continues ſtill, it will prepare us to open Atheiſm and Irreligion. God cannot be at Peace with us, while our Adulteries are ſo many, while Drunkenneſs is ſo common, while Religion is ſo much ſcorned, even by thoſe who ſeem zealous for it; while Curſing and Swearing are the uſual Dialect; while Profanity, ſcurrilous Talk, and many other things which ought not to be named among Chriſtians, are ſo openly and bare-facedly practiſed among us. By your endeavours to redreſs theſe, and at leaſt, to make People aſhamed of them, if they

they do not forſake them; You ſhall alſo, in your publick Capacity, ſhew the reality of your Repentance, both to God and the World. It is an ordinary thing for all People, who have ſome one great thing in their Eye, to look only at that, and to over-look many other Things, if they do not immediately belong to that of which they are chiefly affraid. Popery is now in your Eye, and it ought to be ſo, till you have to purpoſe ſecured us from the danger of it: But at the ſame time you ought to look further, to the Ground of God's diſpleaſure againſt us, to that which has brought us into all this Danger, and muſt certainly bring ruin on us in concluſion, if effectual Remedies are not found out in time. Our Irreligion and Impiety has made many to be little concerned in theſe Matters; and our Contentions about ſome inconſiderable Things, has diverted the Thoughts and Endeavours of others, to the ſecuring of particular Intereſts, or making of Parties.

To theſe, if you provide effectual Remedies, both for reforming and uniting us, then you ſhall be had in perpetual remembrance, as the Repairers of our Breaches, and the Reſtorers of our Ruins: ſo that all ſhall bleſs you, and in their wiſhes, for a happy Parliament, ſhall name you with Honour, and wiſh it may be ſuch a one as this has been.

We have all the reaſon in the World to conclude, that this Nation is dear unto God; and we are ſure, the Holy Religion we profeſs, is from him; why ſhould we then deſpond, and not ſtill hope in that God, who has hitherto given us ſuch abundant Proofs

of his care of us, and of his regard to the Reformation among us. When we remember by what ſteps and methods it was brought in and eſtabliſhed here; How ſhort the Storm was in Queen *Mary*'s Reign, and that ſhe died without Iſſue, which might have brought us both under Popery, and made us a Province to a Forreign Tyranny; when we reflect on the long and glorious Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, on the happy diſappointment of the *Armada*, believed and called *Invincible*; the diſcovery of the *Gunpowder Plot*, with the later Bleſſings yet in our Eyes, we have from all theſe much reaſon to conclude, that we are in a ſpecial manner favoured of God. Nothing can break off this courſe of Mercies with which he has followed us, but our obſtinate perſiſting in our ſins: If we reſolve on this, there is nothing before us, but a fearful proſpect of Wrath and Indignation. And this leads me to the fifth and laſt Particular, of which I propoſed to ſpeak, which is.

5. That ſuch as do not make this uſe of the Goſpel, as to be thereby led to Repentance, have reaſon to look for ſudden and ſevere Judgments. *If therefore thou ſhalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a Thief, and thou ſhalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* God's Judgments are a great depth, and the Methods of them are unaccountable: Some wicked Nations, and Impious and Tyrannical Governments, have flouriſhed long: Triumph and Victory have ſeemed entailed on them. The *Aſſyrian* of old, and the Turkiſh Empire at preſent, are great Inſtances of this. Theſe are Portions of the World, which

which God for their other sins gave in prey to savage Masters; whose Prosperity made them the fitter Instruments of his Justice. But it is observable, that those Nations whom he has more specially favoured, are more signally punished when their Sins have been so notorious, that it seemed necessary to give publick Evidences of the impartiality of God's governing the World. *You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth; therefore will I punish you for your Iniquities.* Amos 3. 2. The whole History of the *Jews*, till their final, and almost total destruction, is one continued Instance of this. The Roman Empire, when it turned Christian, but was not much reformed by that Light, was given up to be wasted by swarms of *Goths*, *Vandals*, *Huns*, and other Northern Nations, who for near two Ages together, laid it so wast, that what by the Destruction they made, and the Famine that followed upon that, which brought after it unheard of Plagues, the History of that Time contains a Succession of the most terrible Miseries that can be imagined. The *African* Churches, that were the best regulated of any then in the World, yet having fallen from their first Love, and being rent in pieces by Schism, and becoming generally corrupt in their Manners, notwithstanding the excellent Bishops that were among them; St. *Austin* in particular, who was the last of those that were sent to warn them of the Jugments they might look for; which he did faithfully, but nothing prevailing, they were first destroyed by the *Vandals*, and then so totally by the *Saracens* and *Moors*, that the Name of Christ is called on no more in them, except it be in their Dungeons,

geons, by thoſe miſerable Captives that are kept in ſuch ſlavery among them, that it ſhould tear every Chriſtian's Heart to think on it. The Eaſtern Empire was firſt by the *Goths*, then by the *Huns* and the *Avares*, afterwards by the *Saracens*, and finally by the *Turks*, ſo waſted, that the ſmall Remainders of Chriſtianity among them, ſerve only as the Ruins of ſome great Fabrick, to ſhew what once it was. The City of *Antioch*, once among the nobleſt of the World, in which that glorious Name of Chriſtian firſt began, was by a frequent return of moſt terrible Earth-quakes, and devouring Fires, ſo ruinated, that it is now but a ſmall inconſiderable Village. *Sardis*, in my Text, is no better: Theſe Seven Churches here writ to, are now under the ſlavery of *Mahometans*, and indeed retain little but the Name of Chriſtian; ſome of them are ſo entirely deſtroyed, that it is not ſo much as certain where they ſtood. When we hear of theſe things, we ought wiſely to conſider of theſe Works of the Lord: Why ſhould we hope to eſcape, if we are as guilty as they were? But to turn your Eyes to what is nearer you; After the Goſpel was planted here in *Britain*, while we were under the Roman Yoke, and was watered with the Blood of many Martyrs that ſuffered under the Heatheniſh Perſecutions; The *Britons* being bleſt with Peace and Proſperity, did ſoon forget God, and fell from their firſt Love. Then what Judgments fell on them? The Northern People being more Warlike, broke into the Southern Parts, who were ſoft and luxurious: Theſe hiring the *Saxons* to their Aſſiſtance, were thereby brought under a much more cruel

cruel Bondage; and thoſe either rooted out the Chriſtian Religion, or drove it up into the mountainous parts of this Kingdom. What the Sins, both of the Clergy and Laity were, is ſet out by *Gildas*, that lived not long after that Time, and they reſemble our preſent Condition ſo much, that it gives us cauſe to fear the parallel ſhall be as equal in our Judgments, as it is now in our Sins. When the Reformation began firſt in *England*, many run into it, rather out of hatred to the Clergy, and love to their Lands, than out of Zeal for the Truth: So that the Biſhops in King *Edward's* Time, did, by ſome Letters which they ſent about among their Clergy, call upon them to warn the People of the heavy Judgments of God, ready to fall upon them: but they went on in their Sins with a high hand, ſo that the Land was full of Oppreſſion and Injuſtice, Adultery and Senſuality: God viſited them for theſe things, and took away that bleſſed young King, and left them in the hands of a ſuperſtitious and bloody Princeſs, who fearing her own Power was not ſtrong enough to alter the eſtabliſhed Religion, married the Prince of *Spain*, and by a vaſt Treaſure which he brought over into *England*, corrupted the great Men, and the Publick Councils of the Kingdom; ſo that all that had been building up in twenty five years, was overthrown in a little more than one, by Parliaments, over whom Spaniſh Gold had greater influence, than the Senſe of their Truſt, or their Regard to God and their Country. Shall I put you in mind of the terrible Judgment of God, that broke out lately on our neighbouring Iſland, where, the Barbarity of the Natives being

being ſharpened by the Cruelty of their Religion, and the Practices of their Prieſts, a Maſſacre and Deſtruction did almoſt wholly conſume them? How near were we brought to utter Ruin, and how long were we ruled by the Sword, during the late Wars?

Are all theſe things forgotten? Or do we remember them, only to furniſh out Diſcourſe with them? We at preſent are all ſufficiently apprehenſive of our ill condition, we ſee the great danger we are in of Popery's ſubduing us; we ſee an overgrown Neighbour ready to break in upon us, or at leaſt, upon that which is but a ſtep from us. There is a Fermentation among our ſelves, ſo high, that it is like to involve us in great Confuſions: The things that belong to our Peace ſeem to be hid from our eyes. Is not all this of the Lord? Moſt of the Evils we either feel or apprehend, are the natural effects of our Sins and Vices, as well as of the Judgment of God puniſhing us for them. The Vices too common amongſt us, have corrupted the Minds, and darkned the Underſtandings of many, and are like to become their own Puniſhments.

All theſe things are but the beginnings of Sorrows, which ſeem to be coming on us. What do we then? Do we ſit croſſing our hands, accuſing one another, or it may be, faintly condemning our ſelves? We perhaps imagine, if we were rid of Popery all would be well; it is certain, we ſhould be much better than we are: but if the Root of our Diſtemper remains, the carrying off one Symptom will but diſpoſe the way to another. God can either plague us,

by delivering us up to a forreign Enemy, who ſhall have no pity on us; or can again ſend his Arrows among us, a Peſtilence to ſweep away our Inhabitants, or a Fire to burn down our Cities. He can leave us to bite and devour another, till we are conſumed one of another. And if he come upon us, what can we do to withſtand his mighty Arm? Can we reſtrain his Thunders, or be Proof againſt his Arrows? Oh how weak are all Devices, when God blaſts them! If our Diſtractions continue, we are like the Builders of *Babel*, ſo divided, that nothing but utter and irremediable Confuſion is like to be the end of them, if we once fall in pieces.

Well, we are yet in Peace, we riſe up and lie down in quiet; how long it will be ſo, we cannot tell: We ſeem to be near great Convulſions; we have no reaſon to deſire them. We are now full of Wealth, our Trade is free, and much ſpread; we have a Concurrence, both at home and abroad, of many things, that might yet make us a great and happy People, but want the Power to improve it. What ſhall the end of theſe things be? It were too great a preſumption in me, nor proper for this place or occaſion, to enter into Particulars; but one thing I may adventure on, which is, If you of this Honourable Aſſembly, who have now beſpoke the Prayers of the whole Nation upon your Conſultations, would frequently addreſs your ſelves to God, and ſet off ſuch Hours as your Buſineſs can admit of, for earneſt Prayer to God, to direct and bleſs your Councils, and to bend all your Hearts, to that which is both moſt for his Glory, the Eſtabliſhment of his true Re-

ligion, and the Security, Peace, and Happiness of the Kingdom; we might justly hope, *that God, even our God, would give his Blessing* to Endeavours so begun, and so managed: Then should the Light of the Gospel, which is *our Glory, still dwell in our Land: Mercy and Truth should meet together, and Righteousness and Peace should kiss one another: Then should the Lord give us that which is good, and our Land should yeeld her encrease. O that there were such an Heart in us, that we might fear him, and keep his Commandments always; that so it may be well with us, and our Children after us, for ever.*

To God the Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, both now and evermore.

FINIS.